

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 remain pending in this application.

Rejection of claims 1-3, 6, 7 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e)

Claim 1-3, 6-7 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Rumreich (U.S. Patent No. 5,995,160) in view of Kwoh et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,115,057).

The present claimed invention provides a method and apparatus for program signal blocking. A program signal associated with one of a plurality of signal channels is received at a signal input. The signal input selects one of the plurality of signal channels in response to a user input. A signal output provides an output signal derived from the program signal. An auxiliary data decoder detects program related information included in each program signal. A processor is operatively connected to the signal input, the signal output and the auxiliary data decoder. The processor is responsive to user selection of a first operating mode for controlling the output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce user access to the output signal for at least until the program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. User selection of a second operating mode provides user access to the output signals prior to detection of the program related information. Independent claims 1 and 11 include limitations similar to those discussed above.

Rumreich describes a video signal processing system for blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display, e.g., a PIP or POP display, independently. This system blanks the image signal in response to auxiliary image data included in the video signal, the auxiliary image data indicating content of the programming. The blanking may be part of a V-chip feature in which blanking occurs in response to auxiliary information, such as XDS data that is included in a video signal to indicate the content of television programming. Main image blanking occurs only during active video intervals to prevent corrupting sync information. In a system that produces the main image from various types

of video signals, e.g., composite video and s-video, that require separate signal processing paths, main image blanking capability is provided in one signal path only, such as the composite video path. The blanking capability is activated and the associated signal path is selected to provide main picture blanking regardless of which type of signal is providing the main picture. Rumreich is concerned with blanking either or both a main and auxiliary image independently of one another. However, this system is deficient as it does not account for the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode the program related information included in the auxiliary image data. As discussed in column 5, lines 31-40, the central processing unit, upon receipt of a command provided by a user, sends a change channel command along with channel data to the tuner which tunes the next channel. Column 6, lines 18-50 disclose a system whereby the programming information is received and then is compared to a "user-selected rating limit." Only after the comparison, if the content exceeds the user-selected rating limit, is the displayed image modified, such as by blanking the image. Thus, Rumreich neither discloses nor suggests "a first operating mode for controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as claimed in claim 1 and similarly in claim 11 of the present invention.

Program rating packets should be repeated at intervals no greater than 3 seconds unless delayed by closed caption data in the proposed ANSI/EIA-608A technical specification for the transmission of XDS Program Rating packet. Thus, when a new channel is selected, the television receiver may take several seconds to detect and decode the new program related information and take appropriate blocking action. Such is the case with Rumreich. Rumreich is not concerned with reducing user access to an output prior to receipt of the program related information as in the present claimed invention. Additionally, if the system disclosed by Rumreich fails to detect any program related information, the program data is continuously displayed thus allowing potentially undesirable images to be viewed. The present claimed invention, on the other hand, acts as a fail-safe method and prevents unauthorized viewing during the comparison time by "reduce[ing] user access to said output for at least until said program related information is detected." Rumreich is not concerned with the delay time between selection and tuning a

new channel and receipt of the program related information data as in the present claimed invention.

Kwoh et al. describe an apparatus that provides for rating level control of the viewing of a program. The apparatus includes a device for entering a desired rating level for controlling the viewing of a program, a device for extracting rating data from a program video segment, and a device for extracting text data representative of the content of the program video segment from the program video segment. The apparatus also includes a device for determining whether the extracted rating data indicates that the program video segment has an acceptable rating level for viewing with regard to the entered desired rating level and a device for blocking and playing of the program video segment if it is determined that the extracted rating data indicates that the program video segment has an unacceptable rating level for viewing with regard to the entered desired rating level. Only after the comparison has been made between the set ratings and the rating received is it determined if the program video should be blocked. Thus, all program video data is displayed until it is determined that the program video should be blocked.

The Office Action asserts that in column 9, lines 9-36, and column 11, lines 13-58, Kwoh et al. teach the claimed signal blocking mode. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Kwoh et al., similarly to Rumreich, neither disclose nor suggest “controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce user access to said output signal for at least until the program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels” as recited in claim 1 and similarly in claim 11 of the present invention. The Office Action asserts that “the V-block mode enables automatic blocking” (Col. 9, lines 11-12) similar to that of the present invention. Kwoh, as recited in column 9, lines 9-35, cites a method for setting up a V-block by selecting and storing blocking criteria and comparing selections for inconsistencies. Furthermore, Kwoh et al. goes on to state, in column 11, lines 23-31, that “A scene V-block indication 449 can be put into one of the vertical blanking intervals line...If vertical blanking interval decoder 437 detects a scene V-block indication 449 in the vertical blanking interval lines, and if the V-block mode has been enabled by parental control circuitry 40 via line 441, then the vertical blanking

interval decoder 437 will open the V-block switch 439". When the V-block switch 439 is opened, the offending scene from the television monitor is blocked.

Thus, Kwoh et al. do not block the offending scene unless the V-block mode is enabled and the scene V-block indication is detected. Similarly to Rumreich, the offending scene is not blocked until the V-block indication is detected. By reducing access to the output signal for at least until the program related information is detected, the present claimed invention prevents objectionable material from being displayed during the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode program related information included with the program signal. Kwoh et al, similarly to Rumreich, rely on receipt and processing of auxiliary information to block a scene and are not concerned with the delay time between selection and tuning a new channel and receipt of the program related information data as in the present claimed invention. Kwoh et al. only describe blocking a program or scene in response to receipt of program related information (scene V-block indication) and enabling of V-block mode. Thus, Kwoh et al., similarly to Rumreich, neither disclose nor suggest "reduce user access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as in the present claimed invention.

Furthermore, combining the Rumreich system with the Kwoh et al. features as indicated by the Office Action would result in a video signal processing system for providing blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display while providing for rating level control of the viewing of a program. Such a system neither discloses nor suggests the features of the present claimed invention. Additionally, the purpose of Rumreich is to blank main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display. The objective of Kwoh et al. is to provide rating level control of the viewing of a program. In contrast, the present claimed invention addresses the problem of displaying objectionable matter during the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode program related information included with the program signal. The present claimed invention does so by reducing access to the output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. Both Rumreich and Kwoh et al. are silent concerning "reduce[ing] user access to said output

signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as in the present claimed invention. Reducing user access in both Rumreich and Kwoh et al. is dependent upon receipt of ratings information or a V-block indication. Thus, in view of the above remarks it is respectfully submitted that there is no 35 USC 112 compliant enabling disclosure in Rumreich, when taken alone or in combination with Kwoh et al., that shows the above discussed features. Applicant further respectfully submits that claims 2-3 and 6-7 are dependent on independent claim 1. Additionally, claim 11 recites a method for selectively blanking a display including limitations similar to those of apparatus claim 1. Therefore the arguments presented above regarding claim 1 are applicable to dependent claims 2-3 and 6-7, and independent claim 11. It is thus respectfully submitted that this rejection has been satisfied and should be withdrawn.

Rejection of claims 4, 5 and 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claim 4, 5 and 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rumreich (U.S. Patent No. 5,995,160) and Kwoh et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,115,057) in further view of Collings (U.S. Patent No. 5,828,402).

Collings describes a method and apparatus that blocks the reception of television programming which meets specified criteria. Data packets describing television programming are broadcasted with the television signal. These data packets include at least packets which contain category information specifying a level in one or more multi-level categories and/or label information specifying labels applied to the program content of the signal. Data packets in an incoming video signal are detected by a blocking apparatus and compared to preferences stored in non-volatile memory in the blocking apparatus. If the contents of the data packets match or exceed the stored preferences then the video signal is blocked.

Collings is concerned with providing a video blocking system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes. However, similar to Rumreich and Kwoh et al., Collings also does not account for the delay

time required for a television receiver to receive and decode the program related information included in the auxiliary image data. As discussed in column 5, lines 31-40, the central processing unit, upon receipt of a command provided by a user, sends a change channel command along with channel data to the tuner which tunes the next channel. Column 6, lines 18-50 disclose a system whereby the programming information is received and then is compared to a "user-selected rating limit." Only after the comparison, if the content exceeds the user-selected rating limit, is the displayed image modified, such as by blanking the image. Thus, Collings also neither discloses nor suggests "a first operating mode for controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as claimed in claim 1 of the present invention.

When a new channel is selected, the television receiver may take several seconds to detect and decode the new program related information and take appropriate blocking action. Such is the case with Collings. Collings is not concerned with reducing user access to an output prior to receipt of the program related information as in the present claimed invention. Additionally, if the system disclosed by Collings fails to detect any program related information, the program data is continuously displayed thus allowing potentially undesirable images to be viewed. The present claimed invention, on the other hand, acts as a fail-safe method and prevents unauthorized viewing during the comparison time by "reduce[ing] user access to said output for at least until said program related information is detected." Collings is not concerned with the delay time between selection and tuning a new channel and receipt of the program related information data as in the present claimed invention.

Furthermore, combining the systems of Rumreich, Kwoh et al. and Collings as indicated by the Office Action would result in a video signal processing system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes and used for providing blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display while providing for rating level control of the viewing of a program,. Such a system neither discloses nor suggests the features of the present claimed invention. Additionally,

the purpose of Rumreich is to blank main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display; the objective of Kwoh et al. is to provide rating level control of the viewing of a program; and the objective of Collings is to provide a video blocking system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes. In contrast, the present claimed invention addresses the problem of displaying objectionable during the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode program related information included with the program signal. The present claimed invention does so by reducing access to the output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. Rumreich, Kwoh et al. and Collings neither disclose nor suggest "reduce[ing] user access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as in the present claimed invention. Reducing user access in each of Rumreich, Kwoh et al. and Collings is dependent upon receipt of ratings information or a V-block indication. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Rumreich, Kwoh et al. and Collings when taken alone or in combination do not make the present claimed invention unpatentable. Thus, the withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Applicant further respectfully submits that claims 4-5 and 8-10 are dependent on independent claim 1. Therefore the arguments presented above regarding claim 1 are applicable to dependent claims 4-5 and 8-10. It is thus respectfully submitted that this rejection has been satisfied and should be withdrawn.

Should the Examiner feel that anything further is necessary to place this application in condition for allowance he is respectfully requested to contact applicants attorney at the telephone number listed below.

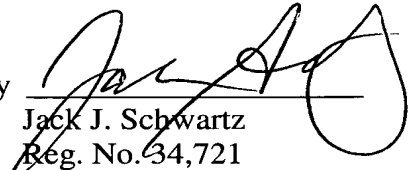
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No other fee is believed due. However, if an additional fee is due, please charge the fee to Deposit Account 07-0832.

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